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Stark County Law Library Association

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BEGINNERS

Portals / Vortals

Portals, the topic of this month's beginner section, are not exactly search engines. But they are used in much the same way—to get to the information you need/want.



Portals started out as front doors to the web with services like AOL. But portals like AOL, Yahoo! MSN, and Excite now offer a “customized interface to the Internet designed to make you feel comfortable and to make it easy to find things.”¹ Besides being a single point of access, portals usually use a navigation system with numerous hyperlinks.

Portals often devote themselves to targeted audiences, like law professors at <<http://www.jurist.law.pitt.edu>> or women at <<http://www.ivillage.com>>. A targeted or vertical portal is called a vortal or vertical portal. They usually focus on particular topics and especially allow you to search for information relating to those topics.

“FindLaw is a classic example of a vertical portal. It focuses on cataloging resources relating to the law and legal issues. Within it, there's even the LawCrawler search engine that

collects pages just from legal web sites. The “vertical” term comes out of the idea that these are places where instead of searching horizontally, or broadly across a range of topics, you search vertically within only a narrow band of interest.”²

Portals do have two disadvantages:

- ⇒ They limit the content you are able to find.
- ⇒ They often lead you to “partner” sites that are often paying for inclusion.

Their advantage is that they are good for “newbies” to get acquainted with the web.

Free legal portals (or portal-like sites) include, but are not limited to:

- ⇒ <http://www.lexisone.com>
- ⇒ <http://www.findlaw.com>
- ⇒ <http://www.law.com>
- ⇒ <http://www.hg.org> (Hieros Gamos)
- ⇒ <http://www.jurist.law.pitt.edu>
- ⇒ <http://www.lawguru.com>
- ⇒ <http://www.LawyerExpress.com>³



Special points of interest:

- Portals are another way to get the information you need and/or want.
- Portals are usually easy to customize to make you feel comfortable and make things easier to find.
- Portals which devote themselves to targeted audiences are called vortals
- Like most things, portals have advantages and disadvantages.

INTERMEDIATE

Personal Portals

What is a Portal?

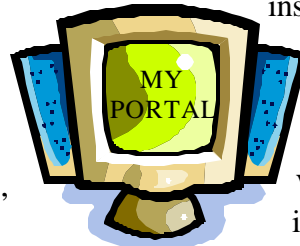
" 'Portal' is a new internet word that started to catch up very strongly in the last year. It refers usually to a main guide that includes a search engine, subject directories, plus additional content (such as current news, entertainment info, etc.), designed to keep you at the portal for as long as possible. A good example would be Yahoo, Netscape's Netcenter, CNN, AOL, etc..."

From: Main Portals at:
<<http://www.mainportals.com/#subject>>

A **personal portal** can contain any or all of the above, just like an ala carte menu.

You get exactly what you want and ONLY what you want!

The best portal is the one you develop yourself to meet your specific needs. On your portal you can include your favorite search engines, megasite, websites, briefs, letters, motions, stock quotes, the weather, traffic reports, even the fax numbers for your favorite restaurants, and their lunch menus.



Remember that a portal is just a website that makes things easy to get to quickly. And although it may take you an hour or so to create your portal, it will be cost-effective in the future! If you have an existing Internet account chances are your ISP will provide you free Web space to host your portal. If you can't get space there, see the May article, "info@starklawlibrary.org" in the *Stark County Bar Journal* or on the web at: <<http://www.starklawlibrary.org>>.

You don't need to learn HTML coding or know anything about website design. Just log onto "1st Site Free: So You Want to Create a Website?" at: <<http://www.1stsitefree.com/index.htm>> and Bill Green's wonderful plan will lead you step-by-step through the process. He has even built in places to ask for help if you get stuck along the way or just have a question about a particular step.

If you create your home page as just a text list, the load time will be minimized. Make it your home page and it appears each time

you open your browser, or store your site on your C: drive for instant loading and you won't even need to even get onto the internet!

If you use a PDA, you can call this page up from the Web and won't have to wait for it to download a lot of graphics.

Another great site for creating personal portals is Mike Ceranski's "Personal Portal Wizard" located at <<http://www.mike.ceranski.com/ppwfaq.html>> on the Web. The wizard he has created is downloaded to your computer, both the wizard and your portal reside there, offering much better security for your personal information. If you use the KISS system and "Keep It Simple Stupid", you can create your portal in about a half hour!

Remember, this site is totally yours, so focus on its content and don't waste time adding frills!

"The speed factor, I think, is what will drive people to personal portals. When I click on Internet Explorer, I usually have something in mind: I'm going someplace; I'm looking for something. I want my list on the screen quickly. Nothing is more annoying than clicking on the browser icon, then waiting an eternity for the thing to open because it's loading something off the Web that I don't want to see." ⁴

ADVANCED Intranets/Extranets/Corporate Portals



The use of an intranet was the topic of the advanced section of the August info@starklawlibrary.org article of the Stark County Bar Journal. This month we will delve into extranets. But before we begin, let me take a half-step back and suggest that you read Daintry Duffy's article, "Why Do Intranets Fail." It is located on the Net at <http://www.idgnet.com/ic_723977_1794_9-10000.html> and deserves a few minutes of your time in order to learn from the mistakes of others. Duffy lists the reasons for failed intranets as:

- ⇒ insufficient planning,
- ⇒ ignoring the user,
- ⇒ lack of organization,
- ⇒ not having a champion/cheerleader who can get people involved and interested in the intranet.

She also suggests that "The CEO should be the one setting the tone for the [intranet's] value." ⁵

Duffy describes a corporate portal as "an internal website that provides proprietary corporate information to employees as well as access to selected websites, such as those of suppliers. Individuals or user groups are given the ability to

customize the portal page, which includes a search engine for internal documents." ⁶ As opposed to an intranet, which she defines as "an internal website offering content and services to employees. Although it may link to the Internet, an intranet cannot be accessed by the general public." ⁷

An extranet is a private network that uses the Internet to securely share part of a firm's information or operations with clients, partners, suppliers, or other firms. An extranet is actually the part of a firm's intranet that is extended to users outside the firm.

The following chart illustrates the differences between the Internet, an intranet and an extranet. It comes from Kerstin Forsberg's web page, "Extranet - a Reference Page" which contains a wealth of information! It is located at <<http://www.viktoria.informatik.gu.se/~kerstinf/extranet.htm#security>> on the Web. The section that I want to bring to your attention is on extranet security. Though some of the links appear dated, they contain a lot of important information. These quotes at the beginning of the section sum up his material.

Continued on page 4

	Internet	Intranet	Extranet
Access	Public	Private	Semi-private
Users	Everyone	Members of a specific firm	Group of closely related firms
Information	Fragmented	Proprietary	Shared in closely held circles

Advanced

(Continued)

An extranet is actually the part of a firm's intranet that is extended to users outside the firm.

A corporation needs to protect its competitive information assets while at the same time optimizing its information exchange.

Security should not be a reason for avoiding cyberspace, but any corporation that remains amateurish about security is asking for trouble.⁹

Infrastructure and staffing costs are only the tip of the iceberg. Read Duffy's sidebar, "The Cost of Running an Intranet."

Another excellent article on the topic is "Law Firm Extranets: Baking a New Pie." It is located at <<http://www.llrx.com/features/lawfirmextranet.htm>> and was written by Jerry Lawson, the author of The Complete Internet Handbook for Lawyers (ABA 1999).

Lawson's article focuses on "extranet development pointers,

challenges to successful implementation, and provides an online bibliography of resources and selected vendors."¹⁰

His book is available to be checked out of the law library or there is an "online pocket part" available at <<http://www.lawyernetbook.com>> with LOTS of great information



including a link to Mark Voorhees's excellent article from the New York Law Journal, "Susskind: The Future of Law Is Wired."

Another very good article on law firm portals is "Private Portals Mark the Latest Advance on the Internet Front" by Carole Levitt at <<http://www.lacba.org/showpage.cfm?pageid=860>>.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ "What is a Portal? I Know Yahoo! Is One, But What Exactly Is It?" October 18, 2001. CNET Networks, Inc. 11 November 2001. <<http://www.zdnet.com/products/stories/reviews/0,4161,917140,00.html>>
- ² "The Vortals Are Coming! The Vortals Are Coming!." Search Engine Watch. 4 April 2000. INT Media Group, 11/12/01. <<http://searchenginewatch.com/sereport/00/04-vortals.html>>
- ³ Ebbinghouse, Carol. "The Sidebar: Portals to the Future of Legal Information." Searcher. July/August, 2001. Information Today, Inc. 9 November 2001. <<http://infotoday.com/searcher/jul01/ebbinghouse.htm>>
- ⁴ Dvorak, John C. "This Time It's Personal." ZDNet. 6 October 1998. Ziff-Davis Inc. 9 November 2001 <http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/insites/dvorak_print/jd980922.htm>
- ^{5,6 & 7} Duffy, Daintry. "Why Do Intranets Fail?" IDG.net. November 2001. CXO Media Inc. 9 November 2001. <http://www.idgnet.com/ic_723977_1794_9-10000.html> From Blogspot <<http://resourceshelf.blogspot.com/>> on 11/8/01.
- ^{8 & 9} Forsberg, Kerstin. "Extranet - a reference page." 12 January 2000. Kerstin Forsberg. 16 November 2001. <<http://www.viktoria.informatik.gu.se/~kerstinf/extranet.htm#security>>
- ¹⁰ Posting of Cindy Chick, cchick@earthlink.net, to Law-Lib@ucdavis.edu (November 1, 2001) (copy on file with author)

By Nancy Stinson, MLS
nancy@starklawlibrary.org